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## It's Our Opinion

EDITORIALLY YOURS

### State Dept. Probes Risks To Prevent A Spy Scandal In National Election Year

**AFTER MONTHS OF STALLING AROUND**, the State Department may have finally crawled out of its "do nothing" shell and recognized the repeated reports that it might be harboring some employees in high security positions whose past records and affiliations classify them as definite security risks.

That's the impression, at least, that one gets from news stories this week indicating that the department has begun a top-secret review of the security status of some of its most trusted employees.

According to these news stories, the State Department didn't voluntarily begin this review. It was reportedly undertaken with great reluctance and only after recent disclosures caused such great apprehension in the White House that the Johnson administration prodded the State Department into action for fear a "spy scandal" could break right in the middle of an election year.

**UP UNTIL THE TIME THE WHITE HOUSE** became disturbed, the State Department had strongly resisted every effort of the Senate Internal Security subcommittee to determine the present status of more than 800 persons who had been classified as potential security risks in an eight-year-old report which had been locked away in department files ever since it was compiled.

Of these 800 persons some three-fourths reportedly had Communist associations which made them suspect. Of these three-fourths some 250 were described as "serious" cases in which the evidence against them was substantial. Half of these so-called "serious" cases then occupied "high-level positions in the department or in the field" the secret report stated.

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The originator of this report, which was dated June 27, 1956, was none other than the late Scott McLeod who then held the position of security director in the State Department. Despite the fact McLeod urged his superiors to take "urgent" action, nothing apparently was done other than to pigeonhole the report away in the hope it would be forgotten.

For a long while the existence of the report remained a well-kept secret but at some yet undisclosed time in the recent past members of the Senate subcommittee apparently received a copy of it and started asking high State Department officials some embarrassing questions about it. Specifically, the investigating senators wanted to know how many of these supposed "security risks" were still in the department and what positions they held.

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE STILL HASN'T BEEN** given this information but it has now been established that some 175 of those listed in the McLeod report as potential security risks are currently employed and their files are now being "re-examined" by the department.

This "re-examination" is reportedly being done by a small "task force" which has been instructed to proceed with the utmost caution and under conditions of great secrecy. What this means, of course, is that nobody outside the department or the inner circles of the White House will be told anything about what the "re-examination" turns up until too late to have any influence in next November's election.

This is typical of the manner in which the Johnson administration has been moving to prevent any number of potentially explosive situations from becoming sharp campaign issues. It must be recalled that until a Communist defector was quoted in a newspaper the other day that the Soviets had managed to plant espionage "cells" in both the State Department and the CIA, little was being done about this business of security risks in the State Department. Now something is being done, but it is all being kept under wraps until such time as it might be politically expedient to let the cat out of the bag.

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AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE take the matter of cutting off foreign aid to countries trading with Cuba. Just a few days ago it was revealed that Spain was one of the nations to be cut off the foreign aid list. Now, however, we are informed that Spain has qualified to keep on receiving aid as an agreement has been worked out with Spanish officials on this problem. No details of the agreement have been made available but Spanish sources have indicated they had agreed to curtail some flight schedules to Cuba to avoid politically embarrassing our government in an election year.

Then there is the Bobby Baker investigation which, despite all of its unsavory reverberations, will undoubtedly be shut off within the near future without the public ever learning just how a Congressional employee earning a salary of approximately \$19,000 a year could build up a net worth exceeding over \$2,000,000.

The very fact that several of the principals in this investigation have sought shelter under the Fifth Amendment clearly indicates that the full story of Baker's operations hasn't been told and probably never will be told because too many people in too many prominent places have played a part in it.

The Baker case, of course, can hardly be compared as a national security threat to the issue of security risks in the State Department. Both, however, clearly show how political factors are affecting the peoples' right to know what's going on in their government, and this is something that should be infinitely disturbing to people who believe the nation's welfare and interests should be paramount to the interests of either of our political parties.

*Jack W. Moore*